



MIGRATION & REFUGEE SERVICES

**Catholic Charities,
Diocese of Arlington**

Who is a “SIV”?

- ❖ A “SIV” is the holder of a Special Immigrant Visa granted to those Iraqis and Afghans who “provided faithful and valuable service to the U.S. government, or ISAF (coalition forces), or a successor mission” in the war zones.
- ❖ They must demonstrate that they “have experienced or be experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a consequence of such employment.”



Who is a SIV?

- ❖ Only Afghans may make new applications.
- ❖ You must have been employed in Afghanistan for a period of at least two years between October 7, 2001 and December 31, 2020
- ❖ The National Defense Authorization Act for FY2018 as signed by President Trump on December 12, 2017 allocated 3,500 additional visas for Afghan principal applicants, for a total of 14,500 visas allocated since December 19, 2014.

Who is an SIV?

- ❖ SIVs receive a Green Card upon arrival in the U.S. and are able to pick their area of resettlement with certain limitations
 - ❖ In the Northern Virginia suburbs, an existing immediate family connection is required in order to receive R&P resettlement services
- [Video: SIVs - Special Immigrant Visa holders](#)
- [Video: Afghan SIVs](#)

Step 1: Apply for Chief of Mission Approval (COM Approval)

- ❖ Verification of Employment in Afghanistan
- ❖ Letter of Recommendation
- ❖ Form DS-157, Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application – filled online with all information
- ❖ 4. Evidence of Afghan Nationality
- ❖ 5. Biographic Data
- ❖ 6. Statement of Threats Received as a Consequence of Your Employment
- ❖ 7. Employee Badge

Note: To hear back on approval or more documents needed, it takes up to **eight weeks**.

After you have gathered all of the required documents listed, attach them to an email and send it to AfghanSIVApplication@state.gov. The email's subject line must contain the principal applicant's name as it is written in the passport or Tazkera, plus the applicant's date of birth using the following format: DAY-MONTH-YEAR.

Who is the Chief of Mission (COM)?

- ❖ The Chief of Mission (COM) is the principal officer in charge of a diplomatic mission and is appointed by the President. For more information, visit the website of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul.

□ <https://af.usembassy.gov/>

STEP 2 - File a Petition with USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services)

You must submit the following package of documents directly to the USCIS Nebraska Service Center (NVC):

- ❖ A completed Form I-360, Petition for Amerasian, Widow(er), or Special Immigrant. [NOTE: To be properly filed, the Form I-360 must include your original signature.]
- ❖ A copy of your passport or Taskera showing that you are a national of Afghanistan, along with a certified English translation, if the document is not in English. (At the time of the visa interview, applicants must provide new Afghan machine-readable e-passports.)
- ❖ A copy of the letter of recommendation that you sent to NVC when you applied for Chief of Mission (COM) Approval.

STEP 2 - File a Petition with USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services)

- ❖ A copy of your COM approval, which should note that the COM or his/her designee:
 - ❖ Has determined that you have been employed by, or on behalf of, the U.S. government or by ISAF, or a successor mission, on or after October 7, 2001, and prior to December 31, 2020, for a period of not less than two years;
 - ❖ Has conducted an independent review of records maintained by the U.S. government or hiring organization or entity to confirm employment and determined that you have provided faithful and valuable service to the U.S. government; and
 - ❖ Has determined that you have experienced or are experiencing an ongoing serious threat as a consequence of your employment by the U.S. government.

Step 3 - Prepare for Your Visa Application

- ❖ Once NVC receives your approved petition from USCIS, NVC will contact you by email to advise you to begin collecting the appropriate documents to move ahead with your visa application. NVC will schedule your immigrant visa interview for you and your family at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate overseas. NVC will forward your SIV case to that U.S. Embassy or Consulate for your visa interview. NVC will work with you to schedule your appointment at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country in which you reside or to which you can easily travel.
- ❖ You must provide an email address to facilitate communication with NVC. You may contact NVC by email at NVCSIV@state.gov.

Step 4, 5 and 6:

- ❖ **Step 4 - The Visa Interview**
- ❖ **Step 5: Medical Checkup and Passport Drop-Off**
- ❖ **Step 6 - Arrival in the United States**

[http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2018/pdf/Global Appeal 2018 full lowres.pdf](http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/ga2018/pdf/Global%20Appeal%202018%20full%20lowres.pdf) -
UNHCR GLOBAL APEAL 2018-2019

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/special-immg-visa-afghans-employed-us-gov.html>



Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence

❖ Greetings

- ❖ Greetings usually involve a handshake with the right hand and a hug with three kisses on alternating cheeks (now a days its one kiss on right cheek). However, shaking a female's hand is not appropriate unless she outstretches her hand first or is a close relative
- ❖ Afghan men commonly greet women by placing their hand over their chest and nodding.
- ❖ Eye contact should be kept to a minimum during the exchange, or avoided if it is between men and women



Cultural Competence

- ❖ **Greetings ...**
 - ❖ Informal greetings between friends of the same gender are less distant and may involve a hug, backslap or kisses on each cheek
 - ❖ To kiss one's forehead or right hand denotes extreme respect, but it is not acceptable for a male to kiss a female in this manner if they are not related.



Cultural Competence

❖ Basic Etiquette

- ❖ Respect a Muslim Afghan's religious duty to pray 5 times a day, but note that a number of Afghans may not observe this
- ❖ Give and receive everything with both hands or your right hand only
- ❖ In Afghanistan, one should not touch people of the opposite gender unless they are very close family or friends
- ❖ It is also considered particularly dishonorable and disrespectful to enquire about an Afghan man's female family members, unless you know the family or person well



Cultural Competence

- ❖ **Basic Etiquette ...**
 - ❖ If you are women in Afghanistan, wait for your male accompaniment to introduce you to another man before engaging with him
 - ❖ A man and woman should not be left in a room or an enclosed space (such as car or room) alone together
 - ❖ It is rude to walk away from someone while they are still talking to you



Cultural Competence

❖ Visiting

- ❖ An invitation is not always needed in order to visit one's house in Afghanistan
- ❖ When visiting a home, always remove your shoes at the door
- ❖ Wait to be led through the house and shown where to sit
- ❖ You may be seated on floor with rugs and cushions. Sit crossed-legged if you can or otherwise in a position that is comfortable for you



Cultural Competence

- ❖ **Visiting ...**
 - ❖ If possible, avoid sitting with your legs outstretched or with the soles of your feet facing another person
 - ❖ Expect to be offered tea and sweets as refreshment. It is a good gesture to accept these.
 - ❖ Your cup of tea will be constantly filled until you indicate you've had enough by covering it with your hand and thanking them
 - ❖ The genders are separated in most social visits. Men socialize with the men in one room, and women in another.



Cultural Competence

- ❖ **Visiting ...**
 - ❖ The Afghans take pride in their hospitality. It is considered an honor to host guests. Families receive more respect the more guests they host
 - ❖ If an Afghan visiting your house and you have a pet dog, ask them before-head if they like dogs. In Afghanistan, dogs are considered unclean and some people are uncomfortable around them or afraid of them



Cultural Competence

❖ Eating

- ❖ Dining differs between Afghan homes but is usually very communal with everyone sharing dishes
- ❖ In some houses, you may be seated on cushions on the floor to eat
- ❖ Food may be served on a tablecloth that spread between these cushions



Cultural Competence

❖ Eating ...

- ❖ Wash your hands thoroughly before eating as food is often eaten with the hands
- ❖ Pass and eat all food with your hand – especially right hand
- ❖ When you are full, leave a portion of food on your plate. Eating everything on your plate is an indication you are still hungry and it will keep getting filled



Cultural Competence

❖ Gifts

- ❖ Gifts may be given upon visiting someone's home for the first time
- ❖ If you are invited to lunch or dinner, you may bring a gift that can be eaten for dessert (fruit, sweets, pastries)
- ❖ Try and place it near the door as you enter or on the table as you sit down so that the receiver sees it but can open it in their own time
- ❖ Never give alcohol as a gift to a devout Muslim or any Afghan you do not have a close personal relationship with



Cultural Competence

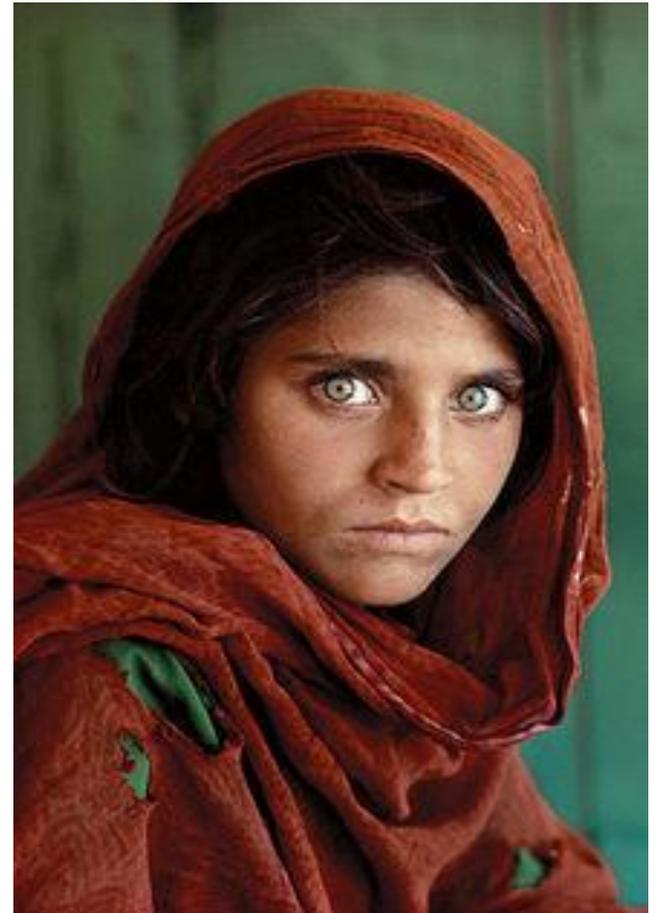
❖ Do's

- ❖ Be sensitive to the experiences that Afghan immigrants resettled in USA have endured. There is a high occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorder among those who have witnessed the loss of their family members and friends. Many who fled to US had serious life threats
- ❖ Offer sympathy to the situation in their home country if it comes up. However, be sensitive not to push for details of their personal experiences in Afghanistan
- ❖ Recognize that experiences of persecution differ between ethnicities. The migration story of Pashtun is likely to be different to a Tajik or Hazara



Cultural Competence

- ❖ **Do's ...**
 - ❖ Request an Afghan's permission before taking their photograph – especially women



Cultural Competence

❖ Do not's

- ❖ If you are a woman in Afghanistan, avoid drawing the attention of men you do not know well (such as by looking in the eye)
- ❖ Do not offer food to a fasting Afghan during the month of Ramadan before sundown. If you can, it is generally good to avoid eating or drinking in front of them as well
- ❖ Do not tell dirty jokes or joke about someone in a humiliating way
- ❖ Avoid bring up the topics of religion, ethnic tensions, politics, the Taliban, warfare or women's rights unless your counterpart initiates the conversation or you have a strong relationship with them



Cultural Competence

❖ Communication – Verbal

- ❖ Afghans tend to speak both directly and indirectly depending on whom they are interacting with. When the person is older than them or of the opposite gender, they tend to speak quite indirectly and respectfully. However, for people of their age or younger, the style is usually direct and open
- ❖ Afghans like to talk a lot, but much Afghan expression is thoughtful and descriptive
- ❖ Raising one's voice at someone in public is disrespectful



Cultural Competence

- ❖ **Communication – Non Verbal**
 - ❖ Afghans usually give people of the opposite gender a respectful amount of personal space – usually around an arm's length. However, people often sit/stand very close to those who are of the same gender.
 - ❖ Winking at a member of the opposite gender is considered extremely inappropriate. A man would likely be highly offended and angry if he saw his female relative being winked at
 - ❖ And, many more ... 😊



